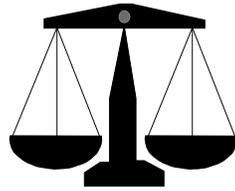


VOCAL NEWSLETTER

November 2008



Volume 8, Number 4

Victims of Crime and Leniency

A NOTE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MIRIAM SHEHANE

VOCAL's Open House held on November 12 was a great success. Debby Tuck did a magnificent job coordinating the house. Joyce Miller and Shelly Linderman are due kudos for the many hours they worked in order to make this day perfect. Shay Stokes exhibited much patience as all of us were giving her instructions in every imaginable direction. Edward Shehane and Ted saved the day by getting the plumbing completed in the nick of time. It was stressful, but the transformation of this lovely old building was worth it. Those who attended the Open House complimented our efforts and seemed eager to help us in providing the new services we are not able to offer. Of course, none of this would have been accomplished without our room sponsors—District Attorney Douglas Valeska, District Attorney Kirke Adams, District Attorney Ben Reeves, District Attorney David Barber, District Attorney Richard Minor, Maureen Trussell, and the Shoals VOCAL Chapter. We are so grateful to them for making our dream become a reality. A special thank you goes to Johnnie Page for the new washer and dryer and Kim Ziglar Martin for our new refrigerator. Our thanks to Jimmy Evans for giving the history and formation of VOCAL. He will always have a special place in our hearts because, after all, without him we would not be in existence. For those of you who were unable to attend, please come by and visit us. We are proud of our new home and want to share it with you.



V.O.C.A.L. Angel House Open House

Dating from the last half of the nineteenth century, the Walker House (Hugueley Building) has served as a residence, restaurant, antique shop, insurance agency and, most recently, an office building. It was once the property of Isaac Vincent and was sold in 1884 to Mrs. Bessie Ware Walker and her sister, Jane S. Ware. The Wares were descendants of Robert Ware, a veteran of the Revolution who was one of Montgomery's early settlers. Bessie's husband, Hal Walker, had been a captain in the Confederate Army and was an attorney. The Walker family owned the house until the 1940s. In 1947, it was converted into a restaurant, The Town House, which operated until 1953. Since then it has served a variety of purposes and was renovated by Henry Hugueley as an office building. We are now proud to call it our home.



CHAPTER NEWS

JEFFERSON COUNTY CHAPTER Roebuck Precinct, Red Lane Road, Birmingham, 1st Thursday of each month, 3 p.m.
 Chapter President: Carol Melton, (205) 841-1465; Email carolmeltonb@bellsouth.net
 Chapter Mailing Address: 4162 51st Avenue North, Birmingham, Alabama 35217

In August chapter members attended a parole hearing for Jerry Lee Jones who murdered Quenette Shehane. We joined with other chapters by getting names on petitions and attending. The room was full. Jones was denied for the maximum of five years. In September we attended a parole hearing for the drunk driver that killed Darryl Kimbrel. Darryl was the only son of Denny & Johnnie Kimbrel of the Shoals Chapter; he was also denied for five years. On August 14 chapter members went to Atlanta for oral arguments with Jeanette Car who is a Victim Service Officer for Attorney General Troy King. The attorney representing Attorney General King's office mopped up the floor with the attorney the defendant had for murdering Jeanette's brother. Hopefully he will soon be on his way to execution. On November 18 chapter members attended a parole hearing for the man who murdered Alicia, Brenda Roberts' daughter.

In August we attended a conference on Child Endangerment and on Internet Crime with young people. There was a part on gangs and also on our ATF Team from Birmingham. It was a very informative conference. For those who choose to bear arms, get a license and practice gun safety. Also be sure to keep children's computers where you can see what they are up to. Know your children's friends. We spend much of our time in court for young people here in Jefferson County who are murdered. It is so heartbreaking. We attended a prayer breakfast the last week in October during Family Violence month. The meeting was attended by Mayor Larry Langford, Chief of Police A.C. Roper, Annetta Nunn, Sheriff's Department, Personnel, Judges, and members of VOCAL. Wanda and Bill Miller and I attended a Candlelight Vigil at the home of Pam Smith whose son, Clifford, was murdered on November 11, 2007. Pam fixed a dinner for all. Probably sixty or more attended. Also in attendance were members of Parents Against Violence, led by Carolyn, whose son was also murdered and the person still not caught. On November 17 we attended General King's Council of Victims meeting.

We were supposed to go to court for the person who murdered Cookie Olafson's son, Seth, but it was put continued until December 8. The shooter in this case made bond. In October we attended a domestic violence trial for Heath Tarwarter. He had cut his girlfriend and threatened to blow her head off. All he got was a harassment charge and told to stay away from her. On October 16 we went to the sentencing of John Ashley and Carley Taylor. John was sentenced to life without parole. But Carley got a split and will be out in two years, since the jury and the judge did not believe the witness against her. The family was very disappointed in her sentencing. It was much too light. We learned the true meaning of leniency from that decision. As we have found out, juries are the eighth wonder of the world.

On November 12 we attended the trial of Willie Smith who murdered retired police officer Scott Johnson's sister, Sharma Ruth, in 1992. She was a beautiful young girl who was kidnapped at Wal-mart, taken to a bank and forced to draw out money, then taken to a cemetery and murdered. The trial only lasted the one day; I guess that was all Judge Cole could stomach. They were trying to get it done over for him being mentally retarded but he had tested at a college in his evaluation. I think we can chalk another one up for Attorney General Troy King's staff.

We attended the VOCAL Open House in Montgomery. It was a really nice surprise to find that District Attorney Doug Valeska, a true friend to victims, had a check in the mail for our chapter. We really cannot express the gratitude we owe him and we will not let him down in working with victims. We feel very blessed to have him as a friend.

We had Alicia Archibald, her brother Jay, and her daughter at our meeting. Alicia's mother was murdered in Montgomery. She will be attending our meetings. Chapter members have been busy planning our Christmas party. We are going to be setting up a booth in Trussville on the 20th at a charitable event. Wanda Miller and I attended a meeting of the Realtors this summer and our group won. There is so much crime here in Jefferson County that it takes everything we can raise to keep on the road and helping victims.

Recently a prisoner escaped but the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department quickly apprehended him. We are proud of our well-trained sheriff's department personnel. Sheriff Hale does so much for victims in Jefferson County. We have Wanda Miller and Billy Jack Logan to help us out. We have named Wanda's car "Victim One". We all love being part of his team.

Victims of Crime and Leniency

Established in 1982
 A 501c3 Non-Profit Organization
 Miriam Shehane, Executive Director

Angel House & Wiregrass Angel House

Projects by V.O.C.A.L.
 Shelly Linderman, Project Director

VOCAL is an advocacy group for victims' rights consisting of concerned citizens, victims of crime and their families, law enforcement officers, attorneys, and others interested in reducing crime and improving the plight of its victims.

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 Montgomery, AL 36103
 1-800-239-3219
 (334) 262-7197

Fax: (334) 834-5645
 E-mail: vocalonline@yahoo.com
 Website: www.vocalonline.org

Wiregrass Angel House
 105 North Bell
 P.O. Box 7133
 Dothan, AL 36302
 (334) 702-7010
 Fax: (334) 702-7014

Chapters include Jefferson, Shelby,
 Shoals, Southeast, and Tuscaloosa

The VOCAL NEWSLETTER is published bi-monthly in January, March, May, July, September, and November. Annual VOCAL membership dues include subscription. Send news items to Mitzie Wheat, Editor, at the VOCAL address or to mwheat@bellsouth.net.

SHELBY COUNTY CHAPTER

Owens House, Columbiana, 2nd Saturday of each month, 2 p.m.
Chapter President: Johnnie Doss Page, (205) 669-4238
Chapter Mailing Address: P. O. Box 32, Columbiana, Alabama 35051

Chapter members attended the September 9 parole hearing for George Soule III who was convicted of Murder DUI/Drugs in the death of Darryl Kimbrel; parole was denied for 4 years. Johnnie Page, Cecilia Hilyer, and Mitzie Wheat attended the VOCAL/Angel Open House on November 12. Johnnie Page attended the November 18 parole hearing for Willie Tyrone Jackson who murdered Alicia Roberts.

Chapter member Cecilia Hilyer wishes to express her appreciation for memorial donations for her brother, Joseph Garcia: Miriam Shehane, Mitzie Wheat, and Shelby County Chapter VOCAL.

District Attorney Douglas Valeska recently sent a donation for the chapter. We appreciate so much his continued support of our efforts in assisting victims of crime. Doug is a true advocate for victims across Alabama.

SHOALS CHAPTER

Christian Faith Church, 640 County Road 323, Florence, 2nd Tuesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.
Chapter President: Denny Kimbrel, (256) 757-1354; Email bamafnatk@aol.com
Chapter Mailing Address: 442 County Road 111, Killen, Alabama 35645

Kenny Strickland (age 25) of Eva was scheduled to stand trial in November for the murder of 47-year-old Rusty Earnest on May 1, 2007 at his home on Wheeler Lake in Rogersville. The "Scumbag Strickland" while out on bond attempted to shift blame to his uncle who had nothing to do with the beating death of Rusty Earnest. His attempt backfired and resulted in Strickland arrested again, pleading guilty to murder and sentenced to Life in Prison. Strickland, after killing and robbing Rusty and killing Rusty's little dog, attempted to burn Rusty's house. At the time of sentencing, Rusty's mother and brother (Dorothy and Grant) gave such powerful impact statements that even one of the defense attorneys couldn't face them. Because of the sudden turn of events and plea, Rusty's sister, Patsy Michael was out of town and didn't get to speak. The Earnest family are members of VOCAL and attend meetings and hearings in support of other victims. Some of our VOCAL members attended the plea and sentencing. I would like to add that I knew Rusty Earnest and had worked around him on different jobs throughout the years. Rusty always did his job in a very professional way and was respected by all. After meeting his family, I see now in how he became such a joy to be around. He always had a smile for everyone, called me "Mr. Denny" as each of his family does now. They are a wonderful but small loving family. Thanks to Lauderdale County District Attorney Chriss Connelly and his staff and a huge thanks to Lauderdale County Sheriff's Department for doing a great job in breaking this case.

Shaun Glouis Shapley (45) of Lexington, AL was charged with the February 8, 2008 strangulation and shooting death of his stepdaughter, Jennifer Helen Braggs. Jennifer was a 17-year-old senior at Lexington High School. At his arraignment he entered a "not guilty" plea. A pretrial hearing is set for February 2, 2009 at 1:30 in Judge Mike Jones' courtroom. The trial is set for February 9. Members of VOCAL and the Victim Service Officer from the Lauderdale County D.A.'s office were at this arraignment. Jennifer's mother and other members of Jennifer's family were also there and supporting Shapley.

A murder trial date has been set for February 3, 2009 for co-defendant Widdowson of Iron City, TN. for the murder of Greg Wright of Green Hill, AL. The capital murder trial for father David Nard is set for March 23 and son Greg Nard for March 3, 2009 for the brutal death of Greg Wright. Members of VOCAL have attended the hearings and will support this family throughout these trials.

Johnnie and Denny Kimbrel, mother and father of Darryl Keith Kimbrel from Killen, would love to thank each one for all the letters, support, and attendance at the September 9 parole hearing for George Soule III from Florence. The 27-year-old Soule was convicted for Murder DUI/Drugs for running a red light in Florence and killing Darryl on November 21, 1999 (one day before Darryl's 32 birthday). Soule was sentenced to 25 years. A special thanks to Jeanette Carr, Joyce Miller, VOCAL Chapter members, Attorney General Troy King, Lauderdale County District Attorney Chris Connolly, and past president and member of the Shoals Chapter of VOCAL MaryAnn Rippey for speaking before the Parole Board.

Members of the chapter have been on the road to Montgomery twice recently, some were able to attend the open house festivities for the state chapter's new home. The building has had a lot of love and hard work put into it and it is obvious in every room. We appreciate the work that went into all the rooms and victims from North Alabama will get a lot of use of the guest rooms. Chapter members Rebecca and Charles Condrey, parents of Troy Condrey, attended the Attorney General's Council of Victims meeting in Montgomery.

A special thanks to Shoals member Debra Gray for working so hard with the Candlelight Vigil commemorating Victims of Domestic Violence Month in October. She also coordinated the workshop for attorneys, law enforcement, and counselors at the Marriot Conference Center in Florence. Our chapter had a table with pamphlets and our Memory Board with pictures of victims from our area.

For the Shoals Chapter members, a reminder to bring some small treat or snacks for our next meeting on December 9 and it is time to renew our dues. We wish the best holidays to all. Our thoughts and prayers go out to long-time VOCAL member, Tilly Wuolukka, who was in an auto accident on October 15. We also express our appreciation to the VOCAL staff for the hard work they do.

SOUTHEAST CHAPTER

Wiregrass Angel House, 105 N. Bell, Dothan, 3rd Tuesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.
 Chapter President: Pat Jones, (334) 585-2684; Email gary399@centurytel.net
 Chapter Mailing Address: 406 Hickory Grove Road, Abbeville, Alabama 36310

Holding Your Hand – One of the joys of being with kids is holding their hands. We do it to keep them safe while crossing the street or to keep them from getting lost in a crowd. And whenever they stumble and lose their footing, we grab their little hands tighter to keep them from falling. That's what God does for us. Inevitably there are stones and cracks that trip us up on the sidewalks of life. That's why it's easy to identify with the psalmist, who said, "My steps had nearly slipped" (Ps. 73:2). We all face a variety of issues that threaten to make us stumble. For the psalmist Asaph, seeing the prosperity of the wicked caused him to question the goodness of God. But God squeezed his hand and reassured him that, given the judgment of God, the wicked do not really prosper. True prosperity, the psalmist discovered, was found in the fact that God was always with him: "You hold me by my right hand" (v. 23). And just for good measure, God reminded him that He would also guide him through life and ultimately welcome him home to heaven (v. 24). How good is that! So, next time you stumble, remember that the powerful hand of God is holding your hand and walking you through life ---all the way home!--*Joe Stowell* (Our Daily Bread, Nov. Issue) **Read: Psalm 73**

Many things about tomorrow, I don't seem to understand; But I know who holds tomorrow, And I know who holds my hand.-- Stanphill

Let God do the holding and you do the trusting.

In September, we attended a hearing in Dothan with the Bessie Mae Thweatt Family for James Earl Walker. We also attended the parole hearing for George Soule III who killed Darryl Kimbrell from Florence. It was denied for four years.

In October, we attended the funeral of April Kirby Phillips from Dothan. She was murdered in San Antonio, Texas on October 11.

Tilly Wuolukka, a member of our chapter, was in a terrible car wreck on October 15 in Ozark. She was sent to Birmingham for almost a month. She is now in Westside Terrance in Dothan.

Our chapter has changed our meeting date. We will now be meeting the 3rd Tuesday of each month.

The holidays are almost here. We will be having our Christmas party, Saturday, December 6, at Troy University in Dothan, Malone Hall, Harrison Room, from 12 – 2 p.m. Lunch will be provided and children and adults are welcome. Kids will be able to see the "Old World Santa". Please call Pat Jones (585-2684) or Bonnie Ingram (899-5022) and let us know if you can come.

We attended the Open House for the State VOCAL and Angel House in Montgomery on November 12. It is a place that we have dreamed of for many years. It was a wonderful day. The house is beautifully decorated. Thanks to all who had a part in making this dream come true. If you didn't get to go, please go visit and see it.

Our chapter would like to thank Mildred Albertson, Bobby Riley, Hope Bennett, Chester Chapel Church, Lakeside Christian Fellowship, Union Springs Baptist Church, Hickory Grove Freewill Baptist Church, Fellowship Baptist Church, and District Attorney Douglas Valeska for their donations to our chapter.

The Memorial Christmas tree is up at the VOCAL Wiregrass Angel House. Please come by to see it during Christmas.

TUSCALOOSA CHAPTER

Tuscaloosa Co. Courthouse, 1st Floor, County Chambers, 2nd Thursday of each month, 6 p.m.
 Chapter President: Betty Holland (205) 556-6390, Email hollandbetty@bellsouth.net
 Chapter Mailing Address: P.O. Box 71709, Tuscaloosa, AL 35407

In June 1987 Chanda Fehler, a Tuscaloosa kindergarten teacher and a graduate student at the University of Alabama, failed to meet with a committee from her class. Later that night a University police officer found her Honda CRX still parked at the University's Riverside Swimming Pool. When Chanda did not report to class the next morning, an intense search was begun. Three days later her body was found in an inlet on the Tuscaloosa side of the Black Warrior River. Several suspects were interviewed, but there was not enough evidence to make an arrest. Twenty-one years later her murder still has not been solved. If you have any information, her family earnestly asks you to call the Tuscaloosa Homicide Unit at 205-349-0518. Kristin Fehler O'Connor (sister of Chanda) and Dorothy Winters (mother) would appreciate any assistance anyone can give in this unsolved case.

Alabama Crime Victims' Scholarship Fund--A scholarship fund has been established at Auburn University for the benefit of students who were dependents of homicide victims and who were 25 years of age or under at the time the crime was committed. To be eligible, a student must be an undergraduate who has attained admission to Auburn University as a beginning freshman or transfer student. The student must have attained a satisfactory academic record in all prior courses completed and must demonstrate need as determined by the SFA Committee. Preference will be given to students who have financial need; however, if no student can be identified with financial need, the financial criteria may be waived. Interested students must complete an Auburn University Scholarship Application and submit it to the Office of Student Financial Aid. For more information, call the VOCAL office at 1-800-239-3219.

MANSLAUGHTER IN HOUSTON COUNTY CASE

Victim: Danny McKinnon
 Prosecutor: Douglas Valeska
 Judge: Ed Jackson

Defendant Joshua Jones
 Charge Manslaughter
 Defense Attorney: Billy Joe Sheffield

On January 8 Danny McKinnon, 15 years old, was sitting with his friend, 22-year-old Joshua Jones in Joshua's truck. There were four people in the truck earlier playing with guns; two of them had gotten out to do something else when Danny was fatally shot with a 40 caliber handgun. This reckless playing cost Danny his life and indescribable loss and pain for the McKinnons. Harry McGhin, Danny's grandfather lost his fishing buddy and future summers spent with Danny on his boat. The McKinnon family will be broken forever, nothing will ever be normal again.

The defense claimed that Josh was handing the gun to Danny when he lost his grip and it began to fall and went off accidentally. This was proven untrue by forensic testimony. The powder burns and tattooing on Danny's skin proved the gun was in close contact with Danny's chest.

No one believed that Joshua intentionally killed his friend Danny, however by his careless act Danny McKinnon died at age 15. Joshua must and will be held accountable by our criminal justice system. He was tried by a jury and found guilty of the original charge of manslaughter and was sentenced to serve 12 years in prison. Our criminal justice system will give Joshua 75% of his sentence free. The most time Joshua will serve will be about 3 years. Is that enough time had Danny been your child?

Joyce Miller

MURDER IN DALE COUNTY

It was Christmas Eve and Allison Fuller Johnson was getting ready to celebrate Christmas with her two sons, her mother, and her brother. Allison's estranged husband came over to the house on the pretense of buying toys for the children. Darrin Johnson picked up a knife and stabbed his wife multiple times in front of his 5 year old son and brother-in-law.

Darrin Johnson knew he didn't have a chance with a jury and pleaded blind to Murder in front of Judge P.B. McLaughlin. In October Johnson's sentencing date was set. Mr. Johnson's defense attorney, William White, tried his best to beg for leniency. But Judge McLaughlin saw through all of the pleas of the defense and sentenced him to 41 years. Thank you to a judge who knows what justice means for both sides and thank you to a prosecutor, Kirke Adams, who made sure the victim and her family were not forgotten.

UPDATE ON WHITNEY LAKE CASE

Robert Wills was convicted of murder in August and sentencing was held in October.

Judge Jackson sentenced him to 35 years.

District Attorneys Support Victims By Protesting Parole

In 1992, Kevin Roper, a serial rapist, of at least 4 victims was sentenced to 4 life sentences in Shelby County and 20 years in Jefferson County. He was denied parole for 5 more years on October 20. Kevin Roper tried to destroy many lives across Shelby and Jefferson Counties by raping multiple women. He came up for parole for the second time but, thankfully, was denied. It was so refreshing to see Mike Anderton from the Jefferson County DA's office as well as Robbie Owens from the Shelby County DA's office at the parole hearing to protest this offender's release. It means so much to victims when the prosecutor takes time to show how important it is to protest, in person, these monsters from being paroled.

Don't Shoot the Messenger

I recently had the unfortunate opportunity to be in a courtroom in Houston County when a judge was upset about a case being brought before him. He felt the case should have never been indicted (although the family would disagree). The judge took a full five minutes to dress down the assistant district attorney in front of everyone in the court. Can you just imagine how that ADA felt standing there, not being able to say anything. If a judge has a problem with a case he needs to address his or her dissatisfaction to the district attorney and not his staff. The ADA's are not in charge of what is prosecuted or not; they are just the messenger. The judge could have also given a directive verdict of not guilty had he thought the case held no merit, however he has to run for re-election.

Joyce Miller

2008--A YEAR IN REVIEW



VOCAL/VOCAL Angel House Accomplishments

8th Annual Governor's Conference
with 244 in attendance

Acquiring & Renovating Wiregrass Angel House

Open House for Wiregrass Angel House

3rd Annual Appreciation Shrimp Boil
for District Attorneys and Prosecutors

Renovating VOCAL State Headquarters

Open House for VOCAL State Headquarters

Provided over a 1,000 services to family members
of homicide victims in the State of Alabama

Save the Date Now!!

April 28th

Governor's Conference in Montgomery, Alabama

Look in upcoming newsletter for more information!!

Complete the membership form and send it with your dues to your local chapter. If you do not have a local chapter, send form and dues to the state chapter at the address below.

VOCAL--Victims of Crime and Leniency

P.O. Box 4449, Montgomery, Alabama 36103

Name _____ Title _____

Agency or Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone (Office) _____ (Home) _____ Email _____

Victim's Name _____ My Relationship to Victim _____

Date of Crime _____ Nature of Crime _____

City and County of Crime (City) _____ (County) _____

Type Membership: Regular \$25 Agency/Organization \$50

Are you available and interested in volunteer work? Yes No

DONATIONS

VOCAL appreciates the faithful contributors who support our efforts in assisting crime victims. Your donations make it possible for us to provide more services and support to victims and is tax deductible.

Doris Edmonds

District Attorney Douglas Valeska

Memorial for Viola Campbell – Miriam Shehane

Memorials for Mike Foster

Amy Barnett

Earnest & Melinda Carr

Gene & Anna Ellison

Amber & Ronnie McLain

David & Kaye Rankin

Venture Cap. Management

Mark & Cindy Yarbrough

Memorials for Joseph Garcia

Shelby County Chapter VOCAL

Mitzie Wheat

Memorials for John Edward Jones

Shelby County Chapter VOCAL

Mitzie Wheat

Memorials for Paul Sidney Little

Doris Little

Memorial for Conni McClenny

Cheryl Wood & Constance Walrond

VICTIM CONTACTS

Governor Bob Riley State Capitol Montgomery, AL 36130 Patricia C. Simpkins Dir., Constituent Services (334) 242-7100 1-800-591-4217	Attorney General's Office of Victim Assistance 500 Dexter Avenue Montgomery, AL 36130 VSO Janette Carr VSO Doris Hancock (334) 242-7339 1-800-626-7676 www.ago.state.al.us	Department of Corrections Richard Allen, Commissioner P.O. Box 301501 301 South Ripley Street Montgomery, AL 36130 VSO Janet Findley LeJeune (334) 353-3871 www.doc.state.al.us State inmate parole info. 1-888-726-9799, Option 4	Alabama Crime Victims Compensation Commission Dr. Cassie Jones Director P.O. Box 1548 Montgomery, AL 36102-1548 1-800-541-9388 www.acvcc.state.al.us	State of Alabama Board of Pardons & Paroles Cynthia Dillard, Director P.O. Box 302405 VSO Debra Bonds Montgomery, AL 36130-2405 (334) 242-8050 Fax (334) 353-7701 www.pardons.state.al.us
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Visit our website at www.vocalonline.org
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